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Felice Gaer is pretty accustomed to India's stonewalling tactics. From 2001, **the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)**, of which Gaer is the chairperson, has been regularly applying for visas for its members to travel to India and report on the state of religious freedom of its minorities. On each occasion, New Delhi has turned down the request. Buoyed by optimistic declarations from State Department officials and promises of help from the US embassy in New Delhi, Gaer thought 2009 would be different. She even decided to postpone a report on India as she hoped to travel there with other commission members on June 12.

But it wasn't to be: **USCIRF's request** for visas has been denied yet again. "We were given no explanation," Gaer told Outlook, "just that now is not a good time. We weren't told when would be a good time." The denial, she says, sends a message that India has something to hide. (The Indian embassy in Washington declined to comment.) Monitoring India from afar, Gaer has been alarmed by the atrocities committed against Christians in Orissa and the Hindu-Muslim violence in Gujarat. She

wanted to take her team to New Delhi, Mumbai, Gujarat and Orissa to discuss with government officials their response to communal violence and its prevention.